ATE OF CALIFORNIA

STATE BOARD OF EQUALIZATION
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July 15, 1993

No. 93/39

TO COUNTY ASSESSORS:

Report of the Geographic Information Task Force

Chapter 782, Statutes of 1991 (AB 429, Farr) created a "Geographic Information Task Force" which was to submit a report to the Legislature on various issues involving geographic and land information systems. The report was completed recently, and we were able to obtain enough copies for distribution to assessors (one copy enclosed). Additional copies may be available from the Governor's Office of Planning and Research, 1400 Tenth Street, Sacramento, CA 95814. The telephone contact is Ben Williams, (916) 322-3170.

The specific areas of inquiry identified in AB 429 boil down to seven major topics. They include:

1. Standards, including data exchange, data quality, etc.

2. Finance -- How do we pay for the needed data bases?

3. Education and research.

4. Institutional considerations, including the possibility of public/private partnerships.

5. Core data needs.

6. Data dissemination issues, including freedom of information, privacy, fees for providing data, etc.

7. Technology issues (hardware/software).

The enclosed final report of the Task Force, which was published in April of 1993, contains a great deal of background information as well as a number of specific recommendations. The recommendations are outlined below.

1. **In consultation with federal agencies developing similar standards, the State should establish a minimum set of information about the data (e.g., scale, accuracy, control points purposes, collection dates, and method) to be routinely required of developers of geographic information databases.**

2. The State should use the "California High-Precision Geodetic Network" as the foundation for all future geographic information production.

3. The State should work within subcommittees established by the Federal Geographic Data Committee to held develop standards for various "thematic" categories of data which are useful in California and which should become the required standard in the state.

4. The FIRESCOPE mapping group should be expanded to include adequate representation from all affected groups and should coordinate with State entities to establish standards for Emergency Services.

5. A series of standard resolutions should be established in order to ensure easy exchange of data, but recognizing that all users have different requirements for the spatial resolution of their data. For land features, two scales of 1:1000,000 and 1:24,000 should be established. For data to be resolved at the parcel level, a committee of data users and data producers should be organized to set a standard of resolution. The resolution should be as large as practical, using reasonable costs, degree of accuracy, and projected data uses as criteria of appropriateness. An initial recommendation should be completed by January 1, 1994.

6. California should begin development of base maps for geographic information. In order to foster the exchange of geographic information, a series of base map scales should be established as standards for geographic information production. The standards for smaller scales (1:24,000 or less) should have the features and be consistent with those base maps developed as part of the national spatial data infrastructure. The standards for large scale (parcel base maps) should be developed in conjunction with county assessors, local surveyors, the State Board of Equalization, and other key entities providing source geographic information. A plan and timetable for completing and financing small and large scale base maps for California should be submitted to the Governor by January 1, 1994.

7. The State should encourage all database management software vendors to provide for transactional revision and updating of data.

8. The State should adopt the Spatial Data transfer Standards (FIPS 173) as its standard for transfer of spatial data.

9. Clarify State law to allow public agencies to recover their full costs for "value added" products and services sold to private parties, without compromising the basic provisions of the Public Records Act.

10. As circumstances permit, consider funding mechanisms to promote coordinated, efficient development and dissemination of geographic information.

11. Include geographic information principles in the curriculum and, if applicable, the qualifying examinations for licensed surveyors, geologists, geographers, foresters,

landscape architects, civil engineers, and other professions with specific concern for geographically related data.

12. **Establish a research agenda for geographic information.**

13. **Establish the California Geographic Information Coordinating Council (CGICC).**

14. **Establish a geographic information policy and coordination function within the Office of Planning and Research, to serve as a central focal point within State government.**

15. **Establish a GIS technical assistance center within the State's Stephen P. Teale Data Center.**

16. **Establish a State data repository and geographic information catalogue/clearinghouse for information that needs to be shared with many agencies.**

Here are a few highlights from the report that may be of particular interest to assessors.

Public Access and Recovery of Costs

The Public Records Act requires public agencies to make available records not exempted from disclosure. The fee for providing such records is, generally, the cost of making the copies. The report recommends modification of the Act to permit agencies to offer "value added" products such as network access or processed compilations of data at prices that permit recovery of direct and indirect (e.g. development) costs. See page 4 and pages 44 through 50.

Technical Standards

The report points out that adequate hardware and software exists and is advancing more rapidly than users' ability to use them. The primary obstacles to the highest and best use of GIS are lack of data portability and coordination of technical standards. On page 11:

> "Several California counties are developing computer base maps, but these may not be in agreement on control points and scales of resolution. Although the State Board of Equalization recommends standards for county assessors' manual parcel mapping, no mechanism has been established to coordinate these disparate local efforts into a comprehensive, multi-purpose statewide digital model for use by all interested parties."

Metadata

"Metadata" is data about data. For purposes of mapping, it means such things as the lineage of the map, the accuracy, the scale, etc. Such documentation is often treated casually or is done according to unique in-house standards, but for an external user, the metadata must be complete and easy to use. See pages 32 and 33.

As the report points out, current budget limitations are hampering the development of GIS in California. However, GIS is being developed,

and we can expect the rate of development and the demand for uniform standards to increase rapidly during the next few years. Assessors will be asked if not required to participate in developing GIS. We believe it is essential that assessors participate in the development of GIS, both to ensure that assessors' parcel maps continue to be useful and efficient for property tax assessment purposes (avoid mandatory standards that would degrade the maps or increase costs unreasonably), and to ensure that the assessment community will benefit from the opportunities that GIS offers. Accordingly, it is in your interest to keep informed on GIS development and to be prepared to make changes in the way mapping is currently performed.

I urge you to read the enclosed report carefully and consider the importance of allocating resources to monitor or participate in the development of statewide GIS standards.

Sincerely,

Verne Walton, Chief
Assessment Standards Division

Enclosure